GUIDE TO THE SQ20 TUCUNA FILE

[The SQ20 Tucuna file contains specific infromation on the Tucuna (Tukuna or Ticuna) Indians whose territory was located in what is now Brazil, Peru, and Colombia. They lived in the tropical rain forest jungle on the tributaries of the northern side of the Amazon-Solimões River from 71° 15' to 68° 40' W. longitude and in the vicinity of the Putomayo-Ica River. When their traditional enemies, the Omagua, disappeared, they spread out over the island and shores of the Solimões as far as 66° 30' W. longitude. The Tucuna language belongs to the Macro-Tucanoan Division of the Andean-Equatorial Macro-phylum. In 1865, Marcoy estimated that due to epidemics and the work of missionaries, the Tucuna were reduced in population to a mere 150 individuals. Nimuendajú, however, who did fieldwork in 1941-1942, conservatively estimated that there were 2,000 Tucuna in Brazil and a total of 3,000 altogether. Whether this reflects a population increase or unreliable estimates is uncertain. In many areas, Marcoy and Nimuendajú completely contradict each other. According to Nimuendajú's figures, the Tucuna represented one of the most numerous native groups in Brazil.

Hunting was a subordinate subsistence activity. The cultivation of sweet and bitter manioc, maize, and other crops, along with the gathering of fruits and nuts, and fishing, constituted the main subsistence activities of the Tucuna. Aboriginally the Tucuna lived in settlements composed of one large communal house which was occupied by several families. After contact, however, settlements were made up of individual dwellings. The Tucuna had strictly exogamous moieties which were made up of unlocalized patrilineal sibs. Each community had a headman and was

politically independent.

According to Nimuendajú, in the early 1940's ceremonies were still being performed, moiety exogamy was still rigorously adhered to, and the religion was relatively intact and free from Christian influence. Most acculturative changes were in the area of material culture. Many of the native peoples neighboring the Tucuna had become extinct by that time. Nimuendajú felt that selective acculturation and a strong sense of ethnic identity were responsible for the relative prosperity of the Tucuna.

There are five sources in the SQ20 file. 2: Nimuendajú is a brief article on the Tucuna from the Handbook of South American Indians. It is recommended for a brief overview of Tucuna culture. 1: Nimuendajú is a major monograph, the only one available for the Tucuna, and is based on three field trips by the author in 1941-1942. 3: Ryden is a specialized source on knitting techniques. 4: Marcoy and 5: Bates are early and brief reports of travelers in the Amazon region. This is not a lengthy file. Most subjects have some coverage, although no subject is covered in any depth. The file was processed in 1960-1961.]